

Dear Instructional Quality Commission,

We are faced with the acceleration of income inequality, accelerating climate change and increases of countless chemicals and other pollutants along with the underfunding of public education and other social services leaving an increasing percent of our children in poverty and increasing costs for college. Earth has lost half of its wildlife in the past 40 years. At the same time we are seeing a decrease in voter participation. I believe that at every grade level the majority of social studies must tie into or reflect on these current critical issues and give hands one practical understanding.

The human brain is not fully developed until a person is in their 20's. The more theoretical and philosophical ideas should be left to the higher grades or college. Younger minds are more literal, concrete and practical.

"To become contributing citizens, students need to explore issues that have relevance outside school, said Glickman," editor of the recent book Letters to the Next President: What We Can Do About the Real Crisis in Public Education. "If the kids don't see relevance, don't see application, then they don't understand what this stuff does in terms of their future life." Glickman holds an endowed chair in school improvement at Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos.

Given today's dire circumstances any study of history that can't be tied to its role in helping the students or their families become savvy consumers and engaged citizens needs to be left to the History Channel, personal exploration on the Internet or an elective.

Citizenship skills need to be practiced and developed in each grade. Just like the simpler math skills create the foundation for the more complex math skills that are continually used to do the higher math, the citizenship skills learned in younger grades need to be strengthened as they are used when learning and practicing the more complex citizenship skills.

The purpose of public education is to produce educated citizens. You don't have a democracy when people aren't voting. You don't have majority rule when a supermajority don't vote. If your citizens aren't voting then public education is failing leading to a cascading failure of the governmental, economic and environmental systems we all depend on. The children of today don't have until they graduate college to get involved.

The children of today have created million dollar apps and inventions. They have started social campaigns impacting many people locally and internationally. They can help to get their parents and community engaged in civic participation including voting. The update for the history-social science framework for California public schools is an opportunity to refocus public education to unleash the power of millions of young minds to participate in the development of California's and the world's future so there will be a viable world for them to inherit.

Sincerely,

Leonard Segal

P.S. Here are my more specific ideas of what should be included in the social studies curriculum.

AB 700

I'd like to know where you have included the requirements of California Assembly Bill No. 700 which requires the Instructional Quality Commission, when the history-social science framework is revised, to ensure that voter education information is included in the American government and civics curriculum at the high school level, including, but not limited to, information on the importance of registering to vote in local, state, and federal elections, where and how to access and understand the voter information pamphlet and other materials to become an informed voter, and certain other information such as ensuring that specified historical documents are incorporated into the history-social science framework when it is revised.

You may read the entire bill at

http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB700

Voting and Election Practice

The California Secretary of State's Office has a mock election program that takes place before the regular election. Too few schools are currently participating in the program. I believe school districts should be directed or encouraged to participate in the programs. Given that the Mock Election happens before the regular election, I believe wherever possible schools should be allowed to practice voting using the same equipment the adults will be using or try to simulate the experience as much as possible for all students.

2014 MyVote California Student Mock Election

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/el/le/yr14ltr0326.asp>

Students and voters need to be given the opportunity to vote on a weekly or monthly basis to reinforce the habit of voting. I believe that will significantly increase the percent of voters who vote every two years. I think it is preferable for students to be taught how to regularly contact their elected representatives about local issues and/or bills going through the committee process. But even practice in voting on school or classroom issues will give practice in local control and democracy.

Media intelligence.

Students and all citizens need to be taught how to determine what is true or false about what a business or candidate is saying in their communications. Students and all citizens should be encouraged to build and support the services and institutions that will enable them to make informed choices.

While it is important for all candidate to have enough funds for their voices to be heard, services and institutions that give voters access to verified facts on the issues, positions, voting records and bio of the candidates can negate large differences in campaign finances.

Lesson Plans for Teachers

A database of helpful lesson plans should be developed, maintained and promoted similar to what the NEA has gathered at

<http://www.nea.org/tools/lessons/informed-voter-education.html>

<http://www.nea.org/home/42718.htm>